

sider John Raven's famous letter on "Alien Plant Introductions on the Isle of Rhum" in *Nature* of 15th January, 1949, which suggests that perhaps Professor Heslop Harrison's ardent and competitive personality may have laid him open to students' practical jokes.

One would like to think that the Large Blue, like the Chequered Skipper (*C. palaemon*), might really exist in suitable inaccessible spots in the West Highlands and Islands of Scotland. But before rumours of its presence can be accepted, fresh specimens must be produced by *bona fide* collectors, and competent entomologists must have the fullest opportunity to examine any alleged locality. So far as *M. arion* and the other species mentioned are concerned, this has been the case on the island of Rum since 1957, without any success.

A Wet Season, 1974

By DAVID BROWN

Charlecote, near Warwick

A local wood introduced my season on the evening of 22nd March, where I recorded ten species of Macros, including a dozen *Orthosia populeti* Fabricius, which seemed early, but judging from their damaged condition, had obviously been on the wing some time.

Later in the month, I travelled down to the New Forest with Andrew Gardner, where we operated four mercury vapour lights and four actinics. The cloud cover gave way to cool and clear conditions and the only worth while moth taken was a female *Lithophane ornitopus* Hufn.¹ which must have already laid. We returned to Warwickshire the following morning and in the afternoon visited Oversley Wood, near Alcester, where in good sunshine *Archiearis parthenias* Linnaeus was abundant, flying around the birch tops and feeding high up on sallow blossom. *Nymphalis io* (Linnaeus), *Polygonia c-album* (Linnaeus) and *Gonepteryx rhamni* (Linnaeus) were also plentiful in all the rides and clearings.

That evening Brian Withers travelled up from Harpenden in the hope of *Trichopteryx polycommata* (Denis and Schiffermuller). We tried a local wood, where the moth traps produced four specimens, all in good condition.

At Oversley on 8th April, m.v. light attracted 25 *O. populeti* and a single *Eupsilia transversa* (Hufnagel). I was in the New Forest again on 11th April. The temperature remained at around 50°F. under the heavily overcast sky. Two m.v. lights and the two actinics produced 18 *Odontosia carmelita* (Esper), one *Notodonta trepida* (Esper), 15 *Polyplocia ridens* (Fabricius), 2 *O. populeti*, 2 *Xylena vetusta* (Hübner), 2 *Eupithecia irriguata* (Hübner) and 21 other species of macro. Detailed searching of blackthorn bushes in the neighbourhood only produced one

¹ Reports indicate that this species has become generally scarcer in recent years. — Editor.

Bapta distinctata (Herrich-Schäffer). Andrew Gardner joined me the following evening when four m.v. lights produced much the same species with the following additions: a female *Saturnia pavonia* (Linnaeus), *Celama confusalis* (Herrich-Schäffer), *Colostygia olivata* (Denis and Schiffermuller) and *Pachycnemia hippocastanaria* (Hübner).

In the local Oversley Wood on 27th May the moth traps attracted *Tethea or* (Denis and Schiffermuller), an uncommon moth in Warwickshire, also 30 *Clostera curtula* (Linnaeus), one *Cerura vinula* (Linnaeus), 10 *Drepana lacertinaria* (Linnaeus), one *Anaitis plagiata* (Linnaeus), five *Bapta bimaculata* (Fabricius), 12 *Anagoga pulveraria* (Linnaeus), one *Selenia lunaria* (Denis and Schiffermuller) and 10 *Lobophora halterata* (Hufnagel).

Andrew and I again visited the New Forest on 7th June. Fifty-three species were recorded for the night including *Sphinx ligustri* (Linnaeus), *Stauropus fagi* (Linnaeus), *Drymonia dodonaeae* (Denis and Schiffermuller), *N. trepida*, *Adatele alni* (Linnaeus), *Bena fagana* (Fabricius), *Pseudoboarmia punctinalis* (Scopoli), *Ectropis extensaria* (Hübner) and *Cleora cinctaria* (Denis and Schiffermuller).

I was in Kings Wood on the Bucks./Beds. border on the nights of 10th and 11th June when the following came to light: *S. fagi* (melanic), *N. trepida*, *D. dodonaea*, and many attractive forms of *Hepialus fusconebulosa* (De Geer).

Oversley on the 12th and 14th June gave exciting results with the first specimens of *S. fagi* in Warwickshire for a good many years, and also *Abraxas sylvata* (Scopoli).

The 16th June found me at Dungeness, where it was warm and overcast with a strong breeze which, thankfully, dropped shortly after dark to give thundery conditions. Forty-six species of macros came to the lights, *Hada nana* (Hufnagel), *Hadaena bicolorata* (Hufnagel), *H. conspersa* (Denis and Schiffermuller), *H. albimacula* (Borkhausen), *H. lepida* (Esper), *Arctia villica* (Linnaeus) and *Earias clorana* (Linnaeus), which were all common and in good condition. The following night was clear and very windy and produced many of the previous night's species but in smaller numbers. However, one moth of interest was a male *Macrothylacia rubi* (Linnaeus) which had been attracted to one of actinic lights.

My next expedition was for *Moma alpium* (Osbeck) in Hampshire where Peter Rogers kindly navigated me to the location. Although the night was cool, clear and windy, four appeared, all chipped, but including a female which laid 110 eggs resulting in 100 pupae awaiting emergence. Other species of interest were three *Apoda avellana* (Linnaeus) and one *Anaplectoides prasina* (Dennis and Schiffermuller).

There was heavy rain on 2nd July but this did not deter me from going to the Chilterns in the hope of *Trisateles emortualis* (Denis and Schiffermuller). It was still a damp and misty night and the large beeches dripped heavily in the cool, hanging night air. The usual species for the area appeared, *S. fagi* very com-

monly, together with numbers of *Amathes ditrapezium* (Denis and Schiffermuller), *Horisme tersata* (Denis and Schiffermuller), *Melanthia procellata* (Denis and Schiffermuller), *Cosymbia linearia* (Hübner), *A. sylvata*, *Hydrelia flammeolaria* (Hufnagel), *S. lunaria* and a single *Cosymbia annulata* (Schulze), but unfortunately no *emortualis*.

A non-collecting trip took me to the Gower Peninsula in the second week of July, and accordingly I was not able to give a large amount of time for exploration. However, at Whitford Burrows in the extensive and pleasant sand dunes, *Melanargia galathea* (Linnaeus), *Eumenis semele* (Linnaeus) and *Argynnis aglaia* (Linnaeus) were all plentiful.

Dungeness received my second visit on 18th July where there was already quite a concourse of collectors. Eventually, having located an untenanted "pitch", I set up my own traps and attracted 39 species, including three *Dasychira fascelina* (Linnaeus), many *Euprodia chrysorrhoea* (Linnaeus), one *Agrotis vestigialis* (Hufnagel) and one *Lithosia pygmaeola* (Doubleday).

The following day Peter Follet and Bill Coster accompanied me to Sandwich, where we witnessed a migration of *Macroglossum stellatarum* (Linnaeus). That evening we again set up our m.v. traps at Dungeness with high hopes of further migrants. However, we were quite unsuccessful, but Peter later wrote to inform me that on the following night he took an *Acherontia atropos* (Linnaeus) — I came away too soon!

Further surprises were in store at Oversley on 22nd July in the form of *Semiothisa notata* (Linnaeus), a new county record, many *Mitochrista miniata* (Forster), four *Parastichtis suspecta* (Hübner), two *Apatele leporina* (Linnaeus) and *Zeuzera pyrina* (Linnaeus), plus 60 other species.

The Wyre Forest was my venue for the next night's collecting. I was pleased that the sky remained overcast after previous experience of the low temperatures in this forest on clear nights. It began to rain in the early morning hours and became warmer, if anything, before dawn. Consequently there were good numbers of moths in the traps when I inspected them in the morning light. Amongst the usual woodland species were *Plusia autographa* (Hübner) and *Parascotia fuliginaria* (Linnaeus).

On the 25th July I was installed near Whitchurch in a Cheshire moss seeking *Lithosa sericea* (Gregson). I arranged the m.v. lights in the more open aspect of the moss and the actinics the other side of a deep ditch in the shelter of some tallows and birches. It was whilst I was hauling my heavy equipment over this ditch that the bank collapsed and I found myself wading thigh-deep in cold, muddy water and it was lucky I had taken a spare change of clothing. Having overcome this minor difficulty, I stayed on to receive a few *sericea*, although mainly worn, also *A. diptrapezina*, *Dypterygia scabriuscula* (Linnaeus), *Anarta myrtili* (Linnaeus), *Plusia festucae* (Linnaeus) and *Schrankia costaestrigalis* (Stephens).

Back at Oversley Wood in Warwickshire the following night,

I recorded another new species for the county, a very early *Enargia paleacea* (Esper), with further *M. miniata*, *A. prasina* and *A. sylvata*. The next night *Procus versicolor* (Borkhausen) appeared.

I enjoyed a trip to fresh pastures in Wales on 6th August for *Coenophila subrosea* (Stephens). Despite a fire which had swept across the bog earlier in the year and made the ground black and ravaged in places, the insect was reasonably plentiful at the lights together with *Hydraecia lucens* (Freyer) and *Zenobia retusa* (Linnaeus). The following evening Bill Coster and two friends turned up. We left the lights running in the bog and travelled to some sand dunes which I had explored during the day. Light and sugar produced *A. vestigialis*, *Euxoa obelisca* (Denis and Schiffermuller), *E. tritici* (Linnaeus) and *Gnophos obscurata* (Denis and Schiffermuller).

I was at Cannock Chase on 13th August on a very damp and misty evening after another day of persistent rain. Sugaring the trees proved hopeless as the mixture merely ran off the saturated trunks. By far the most abundant species at light was *Amathes baja* (Denis and Schiffermuller) in some beautiful varying forms. *Lithomoia solidaginis* (Hübner) and *Stilbia anomala* (Haworth) were only just beginning to emerge with singletons of each. The next night I found *E. paleacea* well out in a Worcestershire wood.

Oversley Wood continued to be a favourite local haunt and produced further surprises. On the 15th it conjured up *Leucania straminea* (Treitschke) and *S. costaestrigalis*, both very rare Warwickshire species.

Further visits to Cannock Chase on 21st and 23rd August found *L. solidaginis* well out together with good numbers of *Diarsia dahlii* (Hübner), some deep red forms of *Amathes castanea* (Esper), *Paradisea glareosa* (Esper), *E. paleacea* and *S. anomala*. Curiously during the latest trip I experienced my second career visit of the law, when at 3 a.m. they arrived to find out "what's going on here then?".

My next expedition was to Devon on 25th August when *Euplagia quadripunctaria* (Poda) was in good evidence. M.V. light near Beer on 26th was very unrewarding and the only migrants were numbers of *Agrotis ipsilon* (Hufnagel). The following night at Dawlish produced *A. vestigialis*, *E. tritici*, *E. obelisca*, *Tholera cespitis* (Denis and Schiffermuller), *L. straminea*, *Arenostola pygmina* (Haworth), *Rhisedra lutosa* (Hübner), *Hydraecia crinanensis* (Burrows) and *Caradrina ambigua* (Denis and Schiffermuller).

I motored over to the north coast near Tintagel on the 28th for two nights in the hope of *A. xanthomista* (Hübner), but with no luck as it appeared I was too early. *Agrotis trux* (Hübner), *H. conspersa*, *Cryphia muralis* (Forster) and *G. obscurata* were still flying.

I returned to Dawlish on 30th August to complete my series of *ambigua* and to add one more *crinanensis* to my collection. The next two nights were spent at Beacon Hill near Sidmouth,

but little of note appeared. On 2nd September the weather broke and severe gales swept through the area felling trees like nine-pins and blocking many roads. These high winds and heavy storms made further collecting impossible and I was forced to make for home and shelter on 3rd September.

Indeed, these winds continued for several days making September of 1974 one of the wildest known.

The calm and mild evening of 11th September found me at Swanage, hoping for *Leucochlaena hispida* (Geyer). The sky remained overcast and the temperature around 60°F. until heavy rain started at 3 a.m. However, I managed to obtain four very fresh *hispida* at the m.v. traps. Also of interest was an early *Aporophila australis* (Boisduval), *Leucania albipuncta* (Denis and Schiffermuller), *A. glareosa*, *Peridroma porphyrea* (Denis and Schiffermuller), many *C. ambigua*, *T. cespitis*, one *Scopula conjugata* and two *G. obscurata*. As I was packing up my equipment the following morning, *Lysandra bellargus* (Rottemburg) and *Polyommatus icarus* (Rottemburg) were in good evidence during a brief sunny interval.

For the next night I travelled along the coast to Portland and set up my traps on the cliffs above Church Ope Cove. It promised to be a good night until a very strong and blustery wind got up at dusk, and, gaining strength, finished up at gale force by 11 o'clock. Driving rain made conditions even more miserable. I was glad to have the company of Mr. Birchenough of West Wickham, who was also after *hispida*. We found several on the grassy banks, mainly resting on the stronger stems of plants, which gave better support in such blustery conditions. My two m.v. lights produced the grand total of two moths, *pronuba* and *xanthographa*! However, the Heath trap, which had been lugged down the rocks 100 feet to a very sheltered little nook had attracted 15 *hispida*, three *Colostygia olivata* (Denis and Schiffermuller) and numbers of commoner species. I returned home the next morning well satisfied with a lovely series of *hispida* obtained in such poor conditions.

I was back at Portland on the night of 5th October. Weather conditions seemed good shortly before dark — overcast, mild and reasonably calm. However, soon after dusk the wind became very gusty to clear the skies and expose the bright moon. However, I was pleased to take four new species, 30 *Leucania l-album* (Linnaeus), 35 *Eumichtis lichenea* (Hübner), two *Antitype flavicincta* (Denis and Schiffermuller) and nine *Aporophyla nigra* (Haworth), all very fresh. I was surprised, after my last visit, still to find *hispida* so fresh and in such good abundance — over 300 at my two m.v. lamps and two actinics. Unfortunately *australis* was becoming worn and was not very plentiful. Migrants continued to be scarce, only a few *Autographa gamma* (Linnaeus), one *porphyria* and one *ipsilon*....

The next opportunity I had to try for more *flavicincta* was on 11th October when I travelled down to the same site with Andrew Gardner. Although I had no luck this time with *flavicincta*, I took a very fresh *Dasypolia templi* (Thunberg) in

the actinic. *A. nigra* was more abundant this time, *lichenea* and *hispidia* were still common, but *l-album* was represented by only one individual. With things becoming slack at the lights by 4 a.m., we decided to pack up and travel home before the roads filled up, completing the journey in $3\frac{1}{4}$ hours to find there were signs of a ground frost in Warwickshire.

The next journey south was on 26th October to the New Forest in the hope of *ornitopus*. Sixteen species of macros appeared but unfortunately no *ornitopus*. *Agrochola macilenta* (Hübner) was abundant, and in good variety, *Eupsilia transversa* (Hufnagel) was also fairly common and in good condition. It was interesting to note that this species preferred the actinic lights to the brighter m.v. lights. *Thera firmata* (Hübner) and *T. obeliscata* (Hübner) were frequent, together with late *Tiliacea aurago* (Denis and Schiffermoller) and *Gryposia aprilina* (Linnaeus).

My 77th and final nocturnal expedition of the year took me to the Chilterns for *Ptilophora plumigera* (Denis and Schiffermuller) on the 8th November. I arrived at 5.30 p.m. by which time it was quite dark. I quickly arranged my two m.v. lights and two actinics. Climatic conditions were ideal with a temperature of over 50°F., no wind, and a very light drizzle of rain. By 8.30 p.m. 85 *plumigera*, all males in splendid condition had arrived, including 40 in one actinic trap! Other visitors on this mild evening were late *T. aurago* and *A. macilenta*, one *E. transversa*, many *vaccinii*, singletons of *Episema caeruleocephala* (Linnaeus) and *Agrochola circellaris* (Hufnagel), many *Poecilocampa populi* (Linnaeus), *Thera obeliscata* (Hübner), *Operophtera brumata* (Linnaeus), *Oporinia dilutata* (Denis and Schiffermuller), *Erannis defoliaria* (Clerck) and *Colotois pennaria* (Linnaeus).

With this satisfactory catch I had packed up my paraphernalia and was heading back to base by nine o'clock.

AN ADDITIONAL FOODPLANT FOR PHYLLONORYCTER MESSANIELLA (ZELLER). — On 10th July 1972, I found several *Phyllonorycter* mines on a young Copper Beech tree in my parent's garden at Higham, Kent. Three days later three *Phyllonorycter messaniella* (Zeller) emerged. Mines have since been found each summer and autumn, in some numbers. I have not heard of this species being taken on Beech in this country, although Hering *Bestimmungstabellen der Blattminen von Europa* (1957) does give *Fagus* as a foodplant.

On this same tree I have also found a larva of *Ptilodon capucina* (Linn.). The larva still retained its green colour and was consequently very conspicuous against the copper colour of the leaves. I am sure that particular insect never survived to see the rays of a mercury vapour lamp! — STEVEN E. WHITEBREAD, 2 Twin Cottage, Grove Farm, Nr. Rochester, Kent. 1.v.75.